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THE RIGHTEOUS OWNERSHIP OF WEALTH

A Lecture on Democratic Theology

By

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The Righteous Ownership of Wealth

The Theologians of a century ago and less were accustomed to prove the existence of God by the argument of "design." The creation of the universe proceeds, they said, according to an intelligent plan. The fact of such a plan is sufficient proof of an Intelligence which produced it, hence there is a Creator who "made the Heavens and the Earth." To some extent this method of proof is still employed.

This method of proving the existence of God does not impress materialistic scientists. There is no need of a creator, they think, to account for creation. It proceeds in accordance with self-existent laws, and the chief business of Science is to discover these laws. When they are found they answer for themselves, and bear their own internal evidence that they were never made by any "Infinite God."

In arithmetic, for instance, there is no need of God to establish that the sum of two and two is four. So it is with the whole of mathematics. Its laws exist. They never were made and they never can be unmade. So also, they maintain, it is with the laws of Mechanics, of Chemistry, of Electricity and even of Biology. Materialistic Science reduces the Universe to mechanism, self-existent and self-operating. There is no necessity of Infinite Intelligence to start it or keep it going.

This reasoning has been extended to include the

social organizations which men form for their mutual interest and enjoyment. Some say that there are laws of society which determine the social conduct of men, just as the laws of the ten digits determine the result of a problem in addition. It is harder to discover them and prove their existence, say these DETERMINISTS, than it is to discover and prove the laws of Mathematics, but in the long run they work out. Man as an individual thinks and acts as he must think and act, and the sum of the thoughts and acts of any number of men, however large, is that which it MUST be. Social conduct is hence nothing more than the result of mechanistic law.

The principal branch of social science was called by the ancients "Economics," by its professors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries "Political Economy" and later again "Economics." Latterly Economics has come to be regarded in some quarters as consisting of "Socialism," Socialism being a school of Political Economy which aims to supplant the other schools. The subject with which this Science deals is Wealth.

The economists have always held the existence of certain self-existent laws of Wealth, but it remained for the Socialists, under the leadership of Karl Marx, to convince themselves that there are mechanical forces in operation which must give a final shape to the whole subject. Marx proved, or thought he proved, by an exhaustive historical investigation, that wealth has always been the subject of struggle between classes. This struggle is nearing an end. It will be finally won by the working class, after which classes will disappear from society. The wealth

will thereafter be collectively owned and distributed and the Science of Political Economy will be complete. It will for the future be the chief and most delightful occupation of Man to watch it work. The Science of Political Economy, to the extent that it is dominated by the thought of Karl Marx, excludes God. The other Sciences exclude God. At all events they do not take into account the Infinite Free Will in their calculations. God has been ejected from Science.

The Marx Socialists will have it that the argument is to be considered closed for those whose bent of mind disposes them to accept the conclusions of Science. It is precisely for this class of persons that I propose to reopen it. There is at least one Science which NEEDS God. This is the Science of Political Economy.

A necessary idea in connection with the thought of God is the idea of Freedom. Of his own choice He created the Universe, if He created it at all. In His own Infinite unlimited ways He conducts it, if He conducts it at all. If God exists, the laws of the universe do not dominate Him, whatever may be their application to man. He is above them and uses them according to His pleasure. They do not DETERMINE His ways.

The science of Political Economy presents a field where close investigation proves that Freedom is at work. In this field the conclusions of the mechanistic calculators are forever being set at naught. Its results are the working out of the Will of Man and in the working out of the Will of Man is to be seen the working of the Will of God. Let those whom the

subject interests follow me and if I bring them to my conclusion, then they must admit the Existence of God as an hypothesis necessary to the intelligent development of the Science of Political Economy. Let us consider the nature of Wealth in connection with its rightful ownership and management.

Whatever may have been the process by which Man came to be on Earth, he is on the earth and he makes use of it. He assumes that he has the right to do this. As prehistoric man, or animal, he eats the earth's fruits and he clothes himself with the skins of the other animals, which he finds upon it and kills. In the course of time he learns to give to the operations by which he obtains food and clothing the name of Labor.

Later he learns to give to the products of his Labor and also to his possessions which were obtained by methods other than labor the name of Wealth. Then comes Political Economy and instructs him that only that is Wealth which is produced by labor, and finally Socialism which tells him that all Wealth except that which is produced by labor is "unearned wealth" and cannot possibly belong to him. The possession of Wealth is thus made a question of righteousness, and, as mechanism cannot possibly be righteous or unrighteous, Socialism becomes self-contradictory, being "for campaign purposes," as it were, obliged to recognize man as a "free agent" in order to hold him responsible.

The attempt to define Wealth as the product of labor defeats itself, and the Political Economy of which it was the conspicuous feature, that of Adam Smith, has very largely lost its hold upon the minds

of men. Wealth, as the product of labor only, is an idea which contains a fundamental error. During thousands of years that men had not conceived the idea they were not troubled with the error and naturally, having discovered the error, they are getting rid of the idea. The world is filled with Wealth and will be, not only if man should cease to labor, but if he should cease to exist. The bee which labors is wealthy and so also is the butterfly which does not and the earth is their wealth, even as it is the wealth of man. The uncaught fish and the unmined ore are wealth and, since the coming of the "trusts," men possess themselves of both and account themselves wealthy by reason of such possession. And again and again the professors and the experts begin the task of making over the "Science of Political Economy."

The truth about the "Science" of Political Economy is that it is deduced, or is deducible, from the laws and customs which man, during the thousands of years he has spent in evolving from a savage into a civilized state of existence has MADE to regulate the ownership of property. It is, as it were, a scholastic distillation from statute law, and statute law is not a "science." It is instead a resultant of the interaction of man's Freedom and the conditions under which Man lives and is not determined by mechanical processes.

A shrewd banker is said to have once observed that there was no necessity for Ten Commandments; one was enough. The one was "Thou Shalt Not Steal." His remark contained the essential truth that pretty much all law has a more or less intimate connection with ownership. Property and women are the two

things about which most laws are made and women are a form of property, or at all events were until very recently. Property and women make necessary the laws against murder and violence. Out of property, in all likelihood, developed government.

Property in the first instance consists of land. Later it comes to include other things, the products of labor for instance. In our day it has come to consist largely of machinery, and about the machinery centers, to a great extent, the most important of the political and economic discussions which it seems are likely to result in the making of a great deal of new statute law and new "political economy."

History shows that land is in nearly all cases acquired by force or fraud, and the thesis of the great French communist, Prondhon, "Property is Theft," may for theoretical purposes be held as tolerably well established. Lawyers will usually admit that property takes its "origin" in theft, but that after it has been "possessed" for a sufficient length of time its possession becomes honest.

Be that as it may, however, it is tolerably clear that all statute law is somehow related to the possession of property. "Civil" laws for the regulation of such possession are promulgated and when these are violated the acts of violation are denominated "crimes" and laws for the suppression and punishment of crime are adopted and enforced. The disputes over property lead to acts of violence and men are imprisoned for assault or executed for murder. Exclusive property rights in women and children are established also and their violation is likewise made criminal by statute law. But it is all, or nearly all, related to property

and property is a more or less permanent form of Wealth, the thing which is the subject matter of the Science of Political Economy and which Socialist Political Economy says is produced only by Labor.

The study of Political Economy then is the study of Law. The study of Law is also the study of Crime. It will be found when the matter is fully worked out that the study of Crime is much more closely related to their Science than the political economists, even the Socialists among them, have heretofore been disposed to admit. Crime, the crime of robbery, establishes many times the first title to property, and crime remains in many cases associated with the title so long as it exists.

If it is true that law has to do in the main with property, then it is in a sense true that the Ten Commandments can be reduced to one, that somehow theft involves all the other transgressions. Theological experts need not be shocked by this view if they will read the Commandments with the idea in mind that God possibly promulgated them with a view of protecting HIS property, and it may prove an aid to others in dealing with the interminable puzzle to which the effort to "settle" the "rightful" ownership of property gives rise, if they will get a firm mental grasp of the notion that perhaps after the adroitness of lawyers and ingenuity of statesmen have exhausted themselves and have failed, humanity may realize that all THE PROPERTY BELONGS TO GOD; that "The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," is no mere expression of poetic or religious fervor, but the literal truth.

During a professional life of more than 30 years I

have had many personal experiences which led me to make a study of crime. I have had, as I believe, exceptional opportunity for the observation of crimes having to do with politics. Political crime aims finally at the acquisition of property and my experience with it has brought me in the main to the view of Proudhon that "Property is Robbery." It has brought me to the further view that the acts which we forbid by law and punish as crimes grow by imperceptible degrees out of acts which custom sanctions and law permits.

My study of history has brought me to the same conclusion but it will prove most illuminating for my special purpose, and most profitable to those to whom I particularly address myself if I speak chiefly from my experience. To this end I shall discuss mainly such offenses as have been brought prominently before the public mind in connection with recent political developments of our country and especially of its states and cities.

I shall speak of Crime in general terms and it is to be borne in mind that I claim to have had very special opportunity for observation along this one line. It is to be borne in mind also that I state that my study of history and sociology convinces me that at some stage in human development probably every act which men now hold to be criminal was subject to dispute as to its criminal character. That is to say, that the line between respectability and grossly criminal conduct was at some time in history not more closely drawn than is now the line between respectability and some of the acts connected with politics, with so-called "big business," with finance

and merchandising even ; and which acts some portion of our population is disposed to brand as dishonest while some other portion maintains that they are entirely legitimate.

In the discussion of this subject from this point of view, it will be necessary for me to assume certain premises as being admitted. First, as to man, I must be allowed to hold the general theory of his evolution from the higher forms of animal life as having been fully demonstrated. I think this will perhaps be easily conceded by, at all events, a very large proportion of well informed persons, since the general doctrine of evolution, applied of course only to man's physical organism, is now held and proclaimed by many men occupying pulpits in Christian Churches or who hold other positions of prominence in connection with religious work.

The belief in the law of struggle for existence and survival may be said to be fully established among scientific men. For those who do not hold the scientific point of view, however, my theory as to crime can possess very little interest and will, without doubt, be rejected without consideration when I have stated that it rests necessarily upon the evolutionary hypothesis.

In the second place, I must make a certain not commonly accepted assumption as to morals. According to this assumption vice and virtue are to be considered as polar or related opposites. That is to say, we are to hold it impossible to draw an absolute line as to any human act at which virtue leaves off and vice begins.

The demonstration of this theory, while not so

generally and commonly known as the proofs of the theory of evolution, is quite as complete. My purpose does not permit me to go into the details of either of these theories. There is an abundance of literature from which anyone interested and doubtful may acquire all desired knowledge concerning them, but as an assent to their truth is requisite to a sympathetic consideration of the theories which I have to propose, it is necessary to make this reference to them.

The purpose which I have in mind will be best served by a discussion of a particular virtue and its opposite vice. I have chosen for this purpose, as I have previously stated, and as being that concerning which I have heard most discussion and had occasion to make most investigation, the virtue of honesty and its opposite vice of dishonesty. This vice and this virtue I maintain cannot be sharply distinguished. There is no point at which it can be asserted with certainty that honesty leaves off and dishonesty begins. These qualities are not sharply distinguished in any single man. We know them only by their extreme manifestations. A thief who has been arrested and convicted is generally held to be thoroughly dishonest, whereas a man who has lived a useful life and has never been charged with dishonesty under any of the laws against theft in its various forms, is said to be honest and considers himself to be honest.

Ordinarily men are ready to become indignant if it is suggested that they are other than honest in the superlative degree. Nevertheless, a man who has had long experience with honesty and dishonesty in their relation to politics, which is the point where they become hardest to distinguish, and who considers the

matter philosophically and without prejudice or favor, is, in my judgment, certain to reach the conclusion that honesty and dishonesty are in some manner merely the opposite phases of the same thing; that they are in reality like East and West, and that not until it is possible to say where the East leaves off and the West begins, shall we know with exactness just what constitutes honesty and what does not.

The criminal statutes abound with attempts to prohibit dishonesty. We have larceny and burglary and highway robbery and forgery, embezzlement, bribery, corrupt solicitation, embracery and various other kinds of dishonesty defined according to law, with prohibition of their commission, and penalties attached. But nowhere in the law, so far as I have been informed, is there any attempt to define dishonesty in general. It would be useless to make the attempt.

In the definition of actions which it forbids, the law does not even approximately define words in the sense in which they are commonly used. Crime, for example, is not defined by law, and no attempt is made to fix a general penalty for crime. The law merely defines crimes, and not as crimes even, but as felonies and misdemeanors:

In a biological sense crime is held to be an unsocial instinct and a criminal act is one which should characterize the individual committing it as an unsocial being. Obviously to make this a legal test would work the very greatest injustice, as there are persons manifesting unsocial characteristics yet who do not work any very great harm to others. Egoism, misanthropy and hypochondria are unsocial traits of character. Even exclusiveness would have to be de-

fined by law and a penalty attached if the law designed to punish every biological crime. As I have pointed out, there are many kinds of dishonesty. All of them may be designated in a general way as theft, and thus in common language the terms dishonest man and thief are in a manner interchangeable. The application of the term "thief" in politics is very common when no one supposes it to be meant that the individual to whom it is applied actually took the property of any other individual from his person or premises. Even the various kinds of theft have to be separated and reseparated in order that definitions may be made which will work in practice.

Let us take the crime of bribery as an example. It is a form of theft, without doubt. The dishonesty of giving a bribe or accepting a bribe is not open to question. And yet, what do we mean by bribery? The masses of the people believe they have been robbed when this crime is committed, and for this reason it is possible to work them into states of great indignation against the briber and the bribe taker. Evidently bribery is a kind of theft.

With such crimes as burglary, larceny, highway robbery and forgery, the law's definitions may perhaps be considered as tolerably well established by long use, but still the laws with reference to them are frequently amended so as to extend or narrow the scope of the crimes forbidden and for which the punishment is prescribed. With reference to the crime of bribery, this is the case in a much greater degree and shows the difficulty of exact definition.

I have not investigated the matter except to follow from day to day the reports of political agitation

leading to new laws, but I have no doubt the application of the term "bribery" has been very much extended, not only throughout this country but throughout the world, in very recent years. For instance, in the State of Pennsylvania, a law commonly called "The Corrupt Practices Act" was somewhat recently passed. It forbids certain actions in reference to elections which formerly were legal, although widely denounced as dishonest. These actions are not all specifically designated by law as "bribery," but as commonly interpreted they are so considered and the men who commit them are referred to in ordinary speech as bribers and bribe takers.

These changes in the law relating to bribery result from the growth of opinion. An action which the great majority of men may consider proper enough is objected to by someone who finds it injurious to his interest or offensive to his views of morals. If he is a person of talent and energy, he expresses his view and prevails upon others to accept it. In due course of time his view comes to be the prevailing view and the law is modified in accordance with it.

Let us take an example near at hand. I am delivering a discourse for your instruction or entertainment. Suppose I make some statement which some person present considers it to his interest shall not be made in public again. Suppose that for a financial consideration paid by him I agree not again to make the statement. This act would not be, in a legal sense, bribery on his part, although, if the transaction resulted from a design on my part, I might be held guilty of extortion. But suppose that, resulting from the frequency of such transactions, a public sentiment

arises which demands that it be made criminal for persons so to influence public speakers and that the crime be designated and punished as "bribery," the necessary legislation would in due time result. It might be necessary to change constitutions, but this can be done.

Let us consider another example; and I am going to describe now something which is in actual operation and public opinion concerning which is in process of formation. The profits of the banking business are not drawn entirely from the interest which banks receive upon loans. We have laws which forbid the loaning of money at rates higher than a certain specified percentage. These laws are evaded by the payment of bonuses both to the banks and to individuals. In many cases bonuses are very large in proportion to the amounts of loans, the common practice being to make the face of the loan for one amount and the actual loan for another amount considerably smaller. It is said even that bonuses amounting to fifty per cent of the actual loan are sometimes charged. It is said and believed, also, that at times these bonuses are paid not to the banks making the loans, but to officers of the banks or other persons possessing and willing to exercise the necessary power to effect the transaction. There is a rising public sentiment in opposition to this practice. Without much doubt, it will, in course of time, be forbidden absolutely or laws will be enacted which will greatly restrict transactions of this kind. It might easily happen that the definition of bribery might be extended to include this kind of offence.

Bribery, according to the most common law defini-

tion, is the acceptance of money or other valuable consideration by an officer of the law either for the performance or non-performance of his duty. A bank official, while not actually in the employ of the government, is nevertheless, in a sense, a public officer and no great stretch of imagination is necessary to conceive that acts which bank officials now legally commit may ere long be classed as criminal and designated as bribery.

At all events, the thing which I am here describing and illustrating goes on constantly. Offenses multiply as population increases and society becomes more complex. Laws which must define the offenses they prohibit must multiply in consequence. Courts are added to courts and policemen and detectives increase in great numbers, as the declarations of new crimes furnishes new criminals to keep them employed. Both officers and offenders represent so much energy withdrawn from the productive power of society in order that what remains may be protected.

I do not mention this in disparagement. I assume that it is all necessary. I am not condemning the tendency, even; but describing it to show how it constantly defeats the attempt to make and apply exact rules for dealing with crimes. The attempt rests for its success upon the making of exact definitions which shall at all times be useful, and this attempt is impossible of success and must forever and ever be repeated as society grows in numbers and complexity.

Let me give another illustration of the difficulty of making exact definitions of words which are in very common use and of which practically everybody as-

sumes without thinking very much about it that they know the meaning.

I once asked a man, who was expressing to me his indignation against someone whom he designated a criminal, what a criminal was. He readily answered, "A criminal is one who commits crime." "And what is crime?" I asked him, "there must be some quality about the act which causes it to be declared in violation of law." "Yes," he said, "it must be a vicious act." "What is vice?" I asked him. He was somewhat puzzled for an instant, but answered, "Well, vice I should say, is anything of which we ought to be ashamed." "Well," I said, "I know a man who has a wart and he is ashamed of it. Is the wart vice and ought the man be considered a criminal?" "Now, look here," he answered, "you are simply 'kidding' me and it isn't any use to argue with me; anyhow, it is certain that any fool can ask more questions than the wisest of men can answer." I saw that he was becoming angry and let it go at that. And it was a good place to stop. He told the truth. It is certain that fools can ask questions which wise men cannot answer—in accordance with any definitions which can be made of the intangible and elusive tendencies which we call moral qualities.

I will, however, attempt a definition of honesty on my own account, not in expectation that it will withstand question, but in order to aid those who wish to do so to continue the speculation upon the subject along their own lines. I have said that I do not consider honesty a quality, but merely a direction. Assuming, however, that it is a quality, I should say that honesty is an impulse which inspires men to limit

themselves to the possession and enjoyment of what is rightfully their own. If this is even approximately correct, it must follow that some possess this impulse or disposition in a greater degree than others and hence again it becomes a direction, a matter of more and less, of higher and lower degree. I have often been asked if I think this or that man is honest. When asked this question by someone with whom I am tolerably well acquainted and who, I therefore feel, will not take offense, I sometimes say that every man is honest and assert that I can go to the penitentiary and find an honest man in every cell.

The meaning of the well-known story of Diogenes and the lantern appears to me to be this: That Diogenes meant to convey the assertion of his belief that no man is so thoroughly honest that it would be impossible for him to commit one dishonest act. It has commonly been assumed to mean that Diogenes meant there was no such thing as an honest man, and, with the modification which I have described, I am prepared to say that I endorse this view myself. He might, with equal truth, have said he was looking for a dishonest man and so have asserted that a dishonest man does not exist, meaning thereby a man who is incapable of any impulse toward honesty or any honest action.

The matter resolves itself into this: That no man possesses so much honesty that he might not have more, or so little that he might not have less. So I say that not until men can tell with certainty where the East leaves off and West begins will they be able to draw a line between honesty and dishonesty, between honest men and dishonest men and say with strict.

truth that those on one side of it are honest and those on the other side dishonest.

Nevertheless, for practical purposes it is highly necessary to assume that individual men are honest or dishonest. This need arises out of the relations of men in society and is constantly growing. It grows because the relations of men constantly grow more and more complex. These are constantly evolving into higher and more diversified forms. This necessity is, at the present time, to be observed to great advantage in the realms of politics and business where there is an ever increasing need of new rules to prescribe what shall be considered honest, moral or lawful, as we may choose to express it, and what shall be considered dishonest, immoral or unlawful conduct.

Men ask, if Darwin's law is true why do we not see it at work? The answer is that we do see it at work. We do not see animals evolving from apes into men, but we do see society changing from a state in which the richest man is most highly respected to one in which the possession of wealth is regarded with distrust. The explanation is that there is a conflict of ideals and that the fittest is destined to survive. When the fittest has triumphed in a conflict between ideals, the unfit becomes immoral. When the fit has firmly established its dominion over the minds of men the unfit is declared by statute law to be criminal. It is not that the unfit, the immoral, the criminal in human acts and practices, was never good, it is that it has been succeeded by a fitter and stronger, and therefore a better, and has BECOME the bad. This process we may see going on around us in the demand for the making of new statutes and in the demand for

the enforcement of old statutes, according to interpretations which were not previously given to them.

This demand and this process affects principally the law relating to politics and business, but it might just as well affect the laws relating to other subjects. If we consider the great religious movements of the middle ages, we are afforded an opportunity to study this process in a merely historic aspect and without being influenced by the prejudices and opinions by which our own conduct is guided from day to day.

A few years ago it was a common practice to appeal to business men for help to "down the Ring" or "down the Boss" in politics. The corruption of politics was described and exhibited to business men as something of which they were incapable and as reason for their giving their aid in the making of warfare against it. Now business itself, is the subject of very many of the same sort of attacks as a few years ago were made upon politics and in which business men were urged to join because of their assumed virtue. It is true that those who make these attacks limit them to what they call "big business" but there can be little doubt that the practices denounced as characteristic of big business are prevalent in little business also to whatever extent the little business man may feel himself safe in carrying them on.

. It is now common among business men to say one to another that it is criminal to be in business, and a halting and uncertain feeling which prevails in the business world is without doubt in some degree comparable to the feelings of fear in the mind of the commonest violater of law who may be meditating

some action and doubtful of his ability to commit it and escape unpunished.

It makes no difference whether it is enacted by legislatures in obedience to popular demand or promulgated by despots according to their own whims, law cannot give a valid title to property. The power which made the law can unmake it, or it can be unmade by a succeeding legislative power. We see this going on constantly with reference to a particular kind of property, namely the offices, which are the prizes for which the politicians contend and the "privileges," out of which "big business" creates its enormous profits. The European war shows it again going on over property in land, some of the governments proposing to establish their rights over large areas of land, and later, though this is not admitted, to give title to individuals.

The Science of Political Economy is valuable chiefly as an agency for influencing statute law in the making. The controversy over the policies of Protection and Free Trade is a case in point. The Orthodox Political Economy "settles it" that Free Trade is the proper policy. The advocates of Protection are not satisfied and they hire a professor to write Political Economy all over again with Protection in the proper position—according to their view. Then comes Socialism and rules out the whole dispute as inconsequential—which it will be when Socialism makes the law. Socialism is going to do away with production and exchange for profit, and, if it does it, of course there will be no occasion to dispute over the merits of free trade and protection. In the same way competition, which is so important and beneficial a factor

of economic life, according to Adam Smith, will never be mentioned—when Socialism makes the law—and the Political Economy.

Socialism proposes to substitute for the titles to property which have been recognized as valid by law for thousands of years the title created by labor. The laborer shall have that which he produces, says Socialism, and he who produces nothing shall have nothing. It being agreed that all the other titles to property are invalid, let us examine that which is asserted by Socialism to be created labor.

Broadly speaking Socialism recognizes no private title to land. The land being social wealth, says Socialism, must be socially, that is to say collectively, communistically, owned. So also with the machinery, though the private ownership of the simpler tools may for a time be permitted as a matter of policy. The Wealth, then, which an individual may own under a socialistic system of laws and economics will be the output of his labor applied to land or to a machine, and it will be necessary to ascertain this by some process of calculation and apportionment, since labor is even now very largely social or collective and apparently destined to become more so.

The deep consideration of this program leads to some conclusions with which the Materialistic Socialists are not suited and they are prone to refuse to admit them. The question is at once raised: "Who owns the property, that is the land and the accumulated Wealth, the Capital?" To this the Socialist answers "Society," but he does not care to go into the question of "Who or what is Society?" Let us consider it regardless of his wishes.

Every individual human being is the child of two parents, of four grand parents, of eight great grand parents, of sixteen great great grand parents and so on backward, the number of progenitors increasing geometrically in the ratio of two with each preceding generation. If four generations to a century are assumed and the multiplication carried backward for a thousand years we shall arrive as a matter of Arithmetic at the point where every individual now living has about 2,000,000,000 ancestors of the same generation, that is a number greater than the number of persons living upon the earth at any one time. Inter-marriage and the confinement of tribes and nations within territorial limits prevent ancestry from working out in accordance with this mathematics, but undoubtedly every living human being represents in his person a great many millions of human being who have lived before him and probably there is commingled in his veins the blood of what was at some time in the world's history its entire human population.

Consider the future in the same manner. Every man who is the father of children may reasonably expect that at some time in the future, say 5,000 years hence, the entire population of the Earth will consist of his descendants. They will be at the same time, the descendants of all others now living, that is to say the descendants of those whose posterity survives until that time. Lines will run out, and families, tribes and even nations will become extinct, but in a broad sense the population of the earth a few thousand years from now will, it is reasonable to think, be the posterity of all who are now living.

We are the heirs of the ages, and of numberless billions of men and women who were our ancestors. They labored for us in a sense as real as that in which they labored for themselves. Their hands conquered the land, their brains produced the laws and the "economics" according to which we hold and administer it. Their genius produced the machines. Their ingenuity even fabricated Socialism. Truly land and capital do not belong to us. We do not even belong to ourselves.

The billions of individuals and the millions of nations yet to be will be their heirs and OURS. And these billions, looking forward and backward to infinity, into the past and into the future to the point where the imagination fails and can perceive nothing of all that is there, constitute Society. Wealth belongs to Society. What better is this for the purpose of comprehension by the limited human mind than to say that Wealth belongs to God?

Socialists pride themselves upon reasoning scientifically, that is from cause to effect. Let me invite them to think of "society" and its possessions according to a conception of Causation which, so far as I am aware, did not occur to Marx or any of their other teachers, and which I will grant is probably too much for minds limited by the "materialistic interpretation of history." The individual man considers himself a free agent. Being presented with an alternative he has the power to do this or to do that, or to do this or not to do it. More strictly speaking he thinks he has this power. For all that he does not know and that materialistic Socialism thinks it does know, his action is determined, but he thinks he has freedom. Out of his real or imagined freedom grows a theory

of individual causation plus individual responsibility. That is to say there is causation which is subject to his control. All men possess this theory and act upon it constantly and habitually. Individual Socialists possess it and act upon it, though in conventions and in their books they manage to lose it and find that all they do is historically, mechanically, materially and economically DETERMINED. The mass of mankind, through their constituted authorities, however, recognise that collectively as well as individually they can measurably control their doings and are responsible for them and for their consequences. This is one kind of causation, the causation which man controls or influences, or which he thinks he controls or influences.

Beyond the causation which he can influence man perceives that there is causation which he cannot influence. The first is extended into the second by imperceptible degrees. The rivers flow to the sea. By a mighty enterprise of labor and engineering man might change the course of a river. By enterprise and labor judiciously employed in connection with natural causes which he cannot control, but which to some extent he understands, he CAUSES great forests to grow. He learns to understand the relations of the seasons and, partly through his understanding of them, he grows his crops and thus produces his food. Thus he controls the crops, but he cannot control the rotation of the seasons. In other ways he learns that there is Causation which he can study and understand, but which is not influenced by his actions and for which he cannot think himself to be in any degree responsible. That is to say, there is a second kind of causation

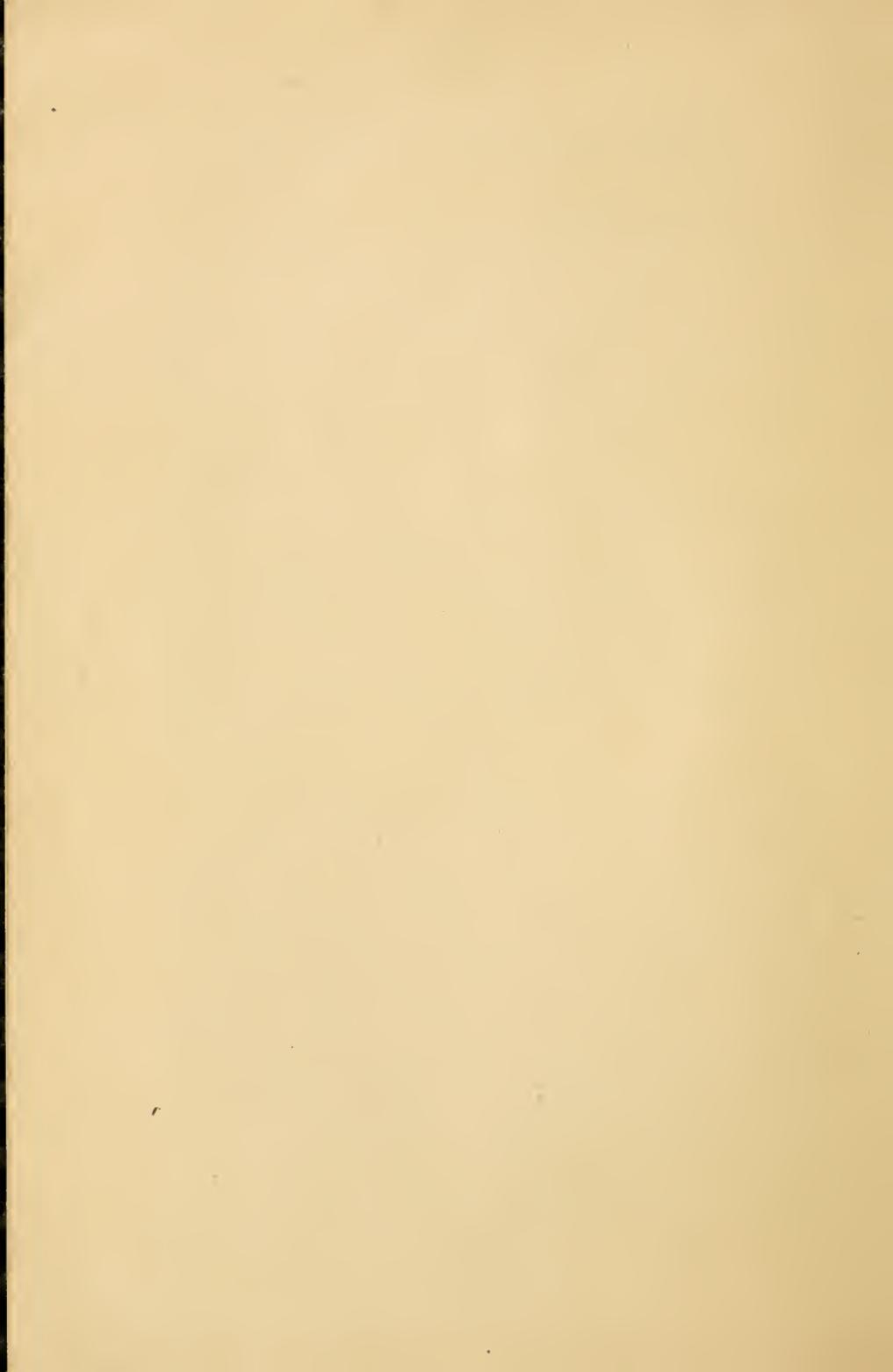
recognized by man, that which he can not control or influence, but which he can study and understand.

Pursuing the study of Causation for his enjoyment and the enlightenment of his understanding, if he will but pursue it far enough, man is brought to the conclusion that there is a third kind of Causation, that which he can neither influence nor understand. His microscopes will not isolate the germ of a thought; no knowledge of chemical affinity will enable him to determine when a human being's choice will be cast for sacrifice and when for selfish gratification. His telescopes cannot fix the boundaries of the universe, or, if they could, they cannot show him that there are no other universes. Most important of all, he is gradually brought to understand that his own powers of understanding are limited, that broaden the circle of his knowledge as he may there will forever remain the limitless circumference of the Unknown. He is able to see that causes for which he is not responsible play upon his voluntary acts and influence their results. He must believe that causes of which he has no knowledge likewise play upon the causes which he accustoms himself to think are comprehensible and that their results are likewise influenced. The agency of freedom in his own sphere of causation, is thus naturally supposed in the sphere of causation which surpasses his understanding. And thus man arrives, and will continue to arrive, Materialistic Socialism and all other Materialism to the contrary notwithstanding, at the SUPPOSITION of God.

Granting then that God is a supposition, the supposition explains the ownership of property as no other supposition can possibly explain it. I ask who

owns the Wealth and Socialism answers "Society." If Society owns the wealth it is responsible for its administration and it is responsible to every individual whom that administration affects. I have shown that Society is not a more tangible entity, not a thing more easy to get hold of and bring to a realization of its responsibility than is the Black Unknown lying beyond the causation which it is possible for man to understand. This Society moreover is also a SUPPOSITION. It existed once and is gone and it is yet to exist. The few millions of individuals living at one time are an infinitesimal fraction of it. We have an opportunity to contribute something to it, but that which we collect from it can have little relation to our individual demands. AND THIS WILL CONTINUE TO BE TRUE UNDER SOCIALISM AS UNDER OTHER POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS.

In deciding then who is the rightful owner of property we have a choice between two suppositions, neither of which is completely comprehensible by the mind of man. But the supposition of God possesses the advantage that it somehow answers the demands of an Intuition, the possession of which intuition points to a belief that Man is an immortal spirit. I commend it to the consideration of Socialists. And I commend to the members and leaders of religious organizations the task of formulating the THOUGHT of God in such a way as that it shall appear reasonable to the men who, busily engaged in the reconstruction of society upon democratic lines, and unable to think of God in terms of primitive dogmatism, have found it possible to forget Him and to assert that Science has no need of His existence.



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